

Message Text

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17

ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-10 OMB-01 SAM-01 SAJ-01 NIC-01 TRSE-00

AID-05 /091 W

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R 181500Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7574

INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CACLQTTA

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 3746

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, IN, UR

SUBJECT: GOI RESPONSE TO ANTI-SOVIET ALLEGATIONS

REF: NEW DELHI 3605

1. DEFENSE MINISTER SWARAN SINGH CONFIRMED IN PARLIAMENT MARCH 17 THAT AN INDIAN AIR FORCE OFFICER HAD RECENTLY BEEN COURT-MARTIALED FOR HAVING "CLANDESTINE" CONTACTS WITH "A FOREIGN NATIONAL". THE DEFENSE MINISTER REFUSED TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE FOREIGNER WAS A SOVIET OFFICIAL BUT BOTH HIS OPENING STATEMENT AS WELL AS HIS REPLIES TO SPECIFIC FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS ESSENTIALLY CORROBORATE THE REPORT OF SOVIET ESPIONAGE WHICH THE HINDUSTAN TIMES CARRIED MARCH 14 (REFTEL). THE DEFENSE MINISTER SAID THAT AN INDIAN AIR
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FORCE OFFICER AND A CIVILIAN ASSISTANT HAD BEEN IN "INTIMATE

CONTACT" WITH A FOREIGN NATIONAL UNTIL ABOUT LAST OCTOBER, THAT THE AIR FORCE OFFICER HAD SINCE BEEN CASHIERED FOR CONDUCT UNBECOMING AN OFFICER AND FOR ACCEPTING A BOTTLE OF BRANDY, THAT SEPARATE CHARGES OF COMMUNICATING CLASSIFIED INFORMATION TO AN UNAUTHORIZED PERSON WERE NOT PROVED, AND THE FOREIGN NATIONAL HAD LEFT INDIA. (SINGH INDIRECTLY CONFIRMED LATER THAT MORE THAN ONE SOVIET OFFICIAL WAS INVOLVED BY USING THE PLURAL "FOREIGNERS" AND ANSWERING "THEY WERE NOT PRIVATE CITIZENS" WHEN ASKED WHETHER THE OFFENDING "SOVIET OFFICERS" BELONGED TO THE KGB, THE EMBASSY OR WERE PRIVATE CITIZENS). WHEN PRESSED BY OPPOSITION PARTY MEMBERS FOR DETAILS OF THE INCIDENT, INCLUDING THE NATIONALITY OF THE FOREIGNER, SINGH DECLINED TO ELABORATE SAYING "IT IS GOOD TO BE CAUTIOUS WHEN OUR INTERESTS ARE CONCERNED". WHEN ASKED IN TURN TO EXPLAIN THIS REMARK, SWARAN SINGH SAID THAT "SO FAR AS THE POLICY OF THE SOVIET UNION AND OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA IS CONCERNED, NONE OF THE GOVERNMENTS EVER ENCOURAGES A POLICY WHICH CREATES A SITUATION WHERE THIS BASIC FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES MAY BE IMPAIRED".

2. IN COURSE OF THE PARLIAMENTARY EXCHANGE THE DEFENSE MINISTER WAS ALSO ASKED ABOUT THE TWO SOVIETS WHO ATTENDED A "SECRET" CONGRESS PARTY CONCLAVE MARCH 2 IN KONARAK (REFTEL PARA 2) AND ABOUT THE ALLEGED NON-DELIVERY OF ESSENTIAL SOVIET SUPPLIES TO INDIA'S MIG FACTORY AT NASIK. WITH RESPECT TO THE KONARAK MEETING, THE DEFENSE MINISTER SIMPLY NOTED THAT NON-INDIANS DO ATTEND THE MEETINGS OF INDIAN PARTIES, JUST AS INDIAN DIPLOMATS HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO ATTEND THE MEETINGS OF BRITISH POLITICAL PARTIES. ASKED WHETHER THE INCIDENT AMOUNTED TO A SOVIET VIOLATION OF THE 1971 INDO-SOVIET FRIENDSHIP TREATY, THE DEFENSE MINISTER DECLARED THAT BOTH COUNTRIES ABIDE BY THE TERMS OF THE TREATY AND "STRICTLY ADHERE" TO THE POLICY OF NON-INTERFERENCE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF THE OTHER COUNTRY. WITH RESPECT TO THE MIG FACTORY SINGH LAMENTED THAT "A SORT OF ATMOSPHERE IS SOUGHT TO BE CREATED (IN INDIA) AS IF THERE IS A LACK OF RESPONSE FROM THE SOVIET SIDE TO GIVE US THE SPARES OR MATERIALS...." WHILE REJECTING SUCH "INSINUATIONS", SINGH NONETHELESS IMPLIED THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE BEEN SEEKING IN CERTAIN INSTANCES "TO MAKE SURE THAT EQUIPMENT ALREADY IN INDIA WORKS AND

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GIVES GOOD RESULTS". BEFORE MAKING FURTHER DELIVERIES.

3. COMMENT- THE GOI HAS THUS AVOIDED BEING DRAWN INTO ANY STATEMENT WHICH COULD BE CONSTRUED AS ANTI-SOVIET OR CRITICAL OF SOVIET PERFORMANCE. HEREIN THE GOI REFUSED TO DISCUSS DETAILS OF THE SOVIET INTELLIGENCE OPERATION AND AVOIDED ANY FORMAL PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE SOVIET ROLE. AT THE SAME TIME THE GOI MANAGED TO AVOID ANY LONGISH STATEMENT ON FOREIGN

INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES IN INDIA, A STATEMENT WHICH
COULD HAVE BEEN CAST IN SUCH A WAY TO BLUNT THE ANTI-SOVIET
EDGE OF THE HINDUSTAN TIMES REVELATION AS WELL AS TO
BLUDGEON THE US FOR ITS ALLEGED ESPIONAGE ACTIVITIES.
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